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DURHAM WHITE STEVENS.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY BARON KOGORO TAKAHIRA, IMPERIAL
JAPANESE AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES.

HISTORY is replete with instances of men who unselfishly have labored in behalf of the general welfare and peace of two nations, and, more particularly, of their native land and of a race which has come under its control. To few men, however, have been entrusted the stupendous work of serving three peoples at the same time: of patriotically advancing the interests of his own country, of aiding in the fashioning of the destinies of another and of assisting in the regeneration of a third. Durham White Stevens was one of these towering figures, and in his life the world has an example of high patriotism, of unusual service and loyalty and of broad humanitarianism, which is worthy of universal commendation and better still of future emulation.

I am able to write of Mr. Stevens in two characters—that of an official of my government and that of his friend. In both capacities, putting aside the natural feeling of grief and indignation which his assassination inspired, I am struck by the sheer wantonness of the crime. It had no justification from any act of his life. He never knowingly did any one an injury; on the other hand, it was his nature unselfishly to serve others. It was absolutely useless; for, in the scheme of life, one instrument, however imperfect, replaces another. It was without consequences or the possibility of them. Japan has set her hand to the plough in establishing stable conditions in Korea and cannot relinquish it until the work is finished. It was perpetrated by an obscure and insignificant Korean criminal, thus carrying out that inexplicable and to me mysterious Will which puts the life of the highest in the hands of the most lowly. Admitting that the crime was inspired by a perverted patriotism, it aroused the

keenest regret among the enlightened of the assassin's countrymen, for they felt the blot which thereby had been placed upon them, and realized how great was the horror caused the American nation at having its soil reddened with the blood of one of its blameless citizens. And, beyond this, they recognized that in the death of this man Korea had lost one of its truest and wisest friends.

It is hardly necessary for me to recite the facts connected with the murder of Mr. Stevens; but I think it important to remind the American people that assassination is the traditional practice of the Koreans, and they would continue to observe it if permitted to remain in the backward state in which they live. Their history is dotted with these black crimes. They are in that unfortunate condition of mediævalism, similar to that in other undeveloped lands, wherein the knife and poison and the modern bullet are directed, not merely against the agents of the government which is endeavoring to provide them with peace and order and to lead them to modern civilization, but against themselves. During the spring of 1907, four attempts were made to assassinate members of the Korean Ministry. Two of the Ministry now in power—the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture—are marked for death. "We must do our best," states a high-sounding manifesto of the leader of the so-called General Korean Righteous Army, "to kill all Japanese, their spies, allies and barbarous soldiers." The purpose thus proclaimed cannot possibly deter Japan from continuing what is her manifest duty, not only to herself, but to the Koreans and the world at large. It arouses, in thinking minds, not so much condemnation as pity for the ignorance it displays. For such crimes as it contemplates, especially when committed upon men of the high type Mr. Stevens represented, can only react upon those responsible for them and the cause, however purposeless, they advocate.

It is not my intention in this article to dwell upon the unwise and improvident policy of the Rulers of Korea, which produced internal conditions unsatisfactory and even intolerable for its own people, and out of which loomed the menace of danger to the peace of the Far East. This feature of the matter can be perhaps best disposed of by merely stating that, in some respects, Korea occupies the same relation to Japan that Cuba does to the

United States. The American people felt that they could not have a condition of disorder at their door, and went to war to stop it. They liberated Cuba, but were compelled by events to re-enter upon its government. Japan's course with respect to Korea is almost parallel. We went to war to maintain Korean independence and were obliged to fight another war, partly because of Korea. And now, in order to abate a nuisance that could only be fruitful of further strife, we are seeking to provide the people of that country with a stable government, under which they may enjoy tranquillity and the prosperity which follows in its train.

This policy has dominated everything Japan has done. It was the policy Mr. Stevens pursued during the time he served as Adviser to the Emperor of Korea. When he first arrived at Seoul and assumed his delicate duty, Mr. Stevens found himself an object of suspicion and every step he advised subjected to the most jealous scrutiny. Here his tact and judgment were shown and re-enforced by his honesty, and it was not long before he enjoyed the complete confidence and trust of the Emperor and his supporters, and he worked hand in hand with them to put into effect the reforms which the interests of the people absolutely required. Those in Seoul who know of his work applaud it, and this includes not merely Japanese but foreigners and Koreans; and some day, I predict, the Korean people, as a unit, will glorify him for it.

But his work in Korea, after all, was merely one feature of Mr. Stevens's career. Its beginning is graven upon American history. After his graduation from Oberlin College and from the Columbian Law School, in Washington, he was appointed Secretary of the American Legation in Tokyo. His appointment resulted from his contact with American public men in the course of his work as a journalist which he performed while studying law. In this profession Mr. Stevens displayed high ability, and he was known throughout the Capital as an energetic, accurate reporter, reliable and dependable. Unquestionably the work quickened his native judgment of men and events, and gave him that clearness of vision and style which is found in all the diplomatic notes he prepared. He came to Japan at the period of our transition; and, sympathizing with us in our effort to adopt modern methods of government and civilization, became the

trusted friend of our statesmen of that time. He studied the Japanese language and soon acquired it. He possessed a capacious mind, and he stored it with our customs and traditions, our literature and our history. So great was the impression he made upon the officials of my Government that in 1883, after a service of ten years in the American Legation, Mr. Stevens was induced to enter the employ of the Japanese Government.

I first met Mr. Stevens in Tokyo in 1877, but it was not until 1883 that I enjoyed those intimate relations with him which true friendship insures. Mr. Stevens's first assignment was to Washington. He came in the suite of the new Japanese Minister, Count Terashima, who had been Minister of Foreign Affairs. At that time Japan was preparing to establish a parliamentary system of government. Desiring to keep the authorities and his friends advised in regard to the methods obtaining in foreign lands, Count Terashima made a close study of the Government of England. He turned his notes over to Mr. Stevens, who used them as the basis of one of the most forceful essays I have ever read. I served as *chargé d'affaires* in Washington at that time, and the pleasantest memories I have relate to my association with Mr. Stevens.

It is unfortunate that I cannot describe in detail the remarkable services Mr. Stevens rendered, not only to my country, but to America and the whole world. I cannot do so for two reasons: first, because etiquette forbids diplomatic revelations; and, second, because I well know that Mr. Stevens, as modest a man as ever lived, would not wish it. In an address which the late lamented John Hay made upon "American Diplomacy," he included the following observation:

"There are two important lines of human endeavor in which men are forbidden ever to allude to their success—affairs of the heart and diplomatic affairs. In doing so, one not only commits a vulgarity which transcends all question of taste, but makes all future success impossible. For this reason, the diplomatic representatives of the Government must frequently suffer in silence the most outrageous imputations upon their patriotism, their intelligence and their common honesty. To justify themselves before the public, they would sometimes have to place in jeopardy the interests of the nation. They must constantly adopt for themselves the motto of the French Revolutionist, 'Let my name wither, rather than my country be injured.'"

So all I can do is to give the bare outlines of Mr. Stevens's

career in the service of Japan. His first assignment, as I have said, brought him to Washington, where he acted as counsellor of the Legation. He remained in the American Capital but a short time, being recalled to Tokyo to perform special work in connection with the revision of treaties between Japan and foreign Powers. Having accomplished this duty, with credit to himself and to the interest of all the nations participating in the negotiations, Mr. Stevens was appointed member of a mission under instructions to adjust certain difficulties that had arisen in the relations of China, Korea and Japan. He returned to Washington in 1887 and remained there until 1893, when he was again recalled to Tokyo in connection with the question of the treaty revision. He was ordered back to Washington, where he resumed his duties as counsellor, but paid official visits to Japan in 1900 and 1901. He participated largely in the revision of treaties between the United States and Japan, and aided in the establishment of official relations between Japan and Mexico. He was the Japanese agent in Hawaii in 1900-1901, in connection with questions which had arisen in those islands. During the first three years of my service here as Minister, Mr. Stevens, as counsellor, rendered invaluable service; and, working together, our friendship thrived. His appointment in Korea, soon after the war was begun, was in accordance with a protocol concluded by the Japanese and Korean Governments.

These are but the skeleton facts of a Giant's career, but those who have a knowledge of the events which have unrolled themselves in the Pacific and the Far East, indeed in the whole world, during the last quarter of a century, can obtain an idea of the mind which dealt in masterly fashion with them. What I love to think of, in connection with Mr. Stevens, however, is the intense desire he had that the relations of his own country and of the country he served should be so close, so firm, that nothing could ever arise to shake them. I do not reveal any diplomatic secret when I say that during the many years Mr. Stevens was associated with the Legation in Washington—and here I speak authoritatively, for I was in charge for a part of the time I refer to—he acted not merely as the counsellor of the Minister, but as an American, and he sought the solution of all questions which was in the interest of both countries. He realized that an advantage by one country over the other was merely a temporary gain,

and that it was certain to be followed by vexatious discussion in the future which might have untoward consequences. Therefore what he sought always was an arrangement mutually satisfactory to all concerned; and he sought it without thought of its effect upon his personal fortunes, for he worked always behind the scenes.

Perhaps the best evidence of Mr. Stevens's loyalty to America and Japan is furnished by a letter he wrote while in Tokyo to a distinguished officer of the American Navy just before he started on his ill-fated trip to Washington. A copy of the letter has been handed to me, and I have been authorized to use it. It is as follows:

"TOKIO, *December 24, 1907.*

"MY DEAR ———:

"Your letter of November 19th, addressed to me at Seoul, followed me to Tokio, whither I have come on my way home. I shall probably leave some time before the middle of January, and therefore, if all goes well, it will not be long after the arrival of this letter before I shall have the pleasure of meeting you personally.

"You have already noticed, of course, that the departure of the fleet from Hampton Roads has been made the occasion of comment by a number of prominent officials and journalists in Japan. These expressions of opinion were elicited in response to requests from the United States, and are a true reflex of the views one hears expressed on all sides in this country.

"Apropos of Japanese opinion on this subject, you say that you observe that the Japanese press has been very quiet of late, and that you hope that the press of the United States will assume the same attitude, as only harm can be done by careless newspaper comments. A truer word was never spoken. But, in the interest of historical accuracy, it should be remembered that most of the silly talk which at first befogged this perfectly proper and natural development of American naval policy did not come from Japanese sources. The disquieting rumors which flew about in such abundance when the proposed movement of the fleet was first mooted were under American and European date-lines. They were repeated naturally in the Japanese press, as were also the indiscreet remarks of certain perfervid American patriots, and this resulted in something like the retort discourteous on the part of one or two sensational newspapers in Japan. The Japanese press as a whole, however,—the press which really represents intelligent public opinion,—was never anything else but quiet. I am inclined to emphasize this point somewhat, because, although it may seem now to possess only reminiscent interest, the impression seems to remain, and apparently you share it, that the announcement of the transfer of the fleet to the Pacific was greeted by a jingoistic outburst in Japan. Nothing

could be more diametrically opposed to the facts. The surmises concerning hostile designs possibly implied by this action on the part of the American Government, as I have said before, came from other sources. They were repeated in Japan, but with incredulity and amazement. There was no reason why it should have been otherwise. The friendship of Japan for America,—and by this I mean the friendship of the great mass of the people,—is a traditional feeling, having its origin in the unique circumstances which first brought the two countries into contact with each other, and strengthened to an unusual degree by the unvaryingly considerate, and sometimes even altruistically friendly, attitude of the United States. It is a deeper and a more genuine feeling than that customarily expressed in the honeyed phrases of diplomatic intercourse. I do not think that this is thoroughly comprehended in America, even in circles usually well informed regarding our foreign relations. And I am quite certain that many of the rest of our countrymen, especially some of those in the Philippines, would be the better for an elementary course in Oriental history. There would then, perhaps, be less of a tendency on their part to ‘imagine strange things.’

“The thing most to be apprehended is that, largely through this ignorance, we may sacrifice one of the most valuable assets which we possess in the East, the genuinely cordial friendship of Japan. Wholly unfounded apprehensions regarding her political aspirations may unconsciously, but none the less surely, lead us into an attitude which cannot fail to retard the development of the great interests we possess in the Orient, interests which need never clash with hers, and which will gain much by the continuance of the intimate relations at present subsisting between the two countries. This is especially true of possible action with reference to immigration. You say there can be no war unless possibly it come from irritation on the part of the Japanese regarding restriction of immigration, which some people seem to demand. You may rest assured that there will be no war on that account. But, supposing that the desire and the purpose of the persons to whom you allude is carried into effect without regard to the feelings or the wishes of Japan, it would be self-deception to expect that the Japanese people will continue to entertain for us the same cordial friendship and belief in our good-will which at present exist. War, as the President has well said, is unthinkable and would be a crime. There is no *arrière-pensée* on the part of Japan, as seems to be thought in some circles which should be better informed, that would ever make it possible under any circumstances save of aggression or attack, which are also unthinkable. There would be no open breach of friendly relations even, but American influence in Japan would lessen to the disappearing-point; and, while beyond doubt the outward amenities of international intercourse would still be scrupulously observed, we would cease to enjoy the advantages which our unique connection with the affairs of Japan has hitherto given us. And it goes without saying that some of our dear European friends would like nothing better than

secretly to do what they could to increase this misunderstanding. It seems to me that the events of the past few months have clearly shown a desire on the part of some of them to embroil the two countries.

"I have been speaking, of course, of the probable results of the passage of an exclusion bill by Congress. The immigration question, as any one at all familiar with the subject knows, presents a difficult problem. But a solution honorable to both parties can be found; and, as there is no good reason why both of them should not deal with the matter in a spirit of mutual accommodation and good-will, I am confident that such a solution will be reached. But, should Congress take the bit between its teeth and pass an exclusion bill, there is no amount of sugar which can sweeten that pill to the Japanese palate. There will, as before said, be no war, and the Philippines and Hawaiian Islands will be as safe from attack then as they have always been; but the warm regard for America which has hitherto been one of the salient features of Japan's international relations will be transformed into a wall of chilly reserve which, I fear, will last for many years to come.

"Pardon me, my dear —, if I appear to be playing the part of a male Cassandra; but, believe me, it is not without good reason. I date back, you know, to the days of Bingham, and those were not so very far removed from the days of Perry and Townsend Harris; and I have seen the ties which these great men created strengthened by repeated proofs of unselfish friendship by the United States for this the most progressive and receptive among the nations of the East. Coincident with that I have witnessed the growth of the firm belief on the part of the people of Japan that the American Government and people are more than friends in the hackneyed and formal sense of diplomatic usage, but sincere friends upon whose fraternal sympathy and regard they could always rely in the settlement of the perplexing problems created by their natural and legitimate national aspirations. It seems to me, therefore, especially regrettable that the warmth of this feeling, so useful to us in the fulfilment of our own reasonable ambitions in the Orient—even if we regard it from a wholly selfish standpoint—should be cooled by action on our part. Above all does this seem a pity when such action is the result of apprehension of dangers largely illusory, but which, even at the worst, can be avoided by the exercise of forbearance and practical good sense.

"Knowing how deeply interested you are in these matters, I have not hesitated to speak without reserve: and at the same time have no objection to your making whatever use of this letter you may think worth while.

"With best wishes, and in the hope of seeing you soon,

"Yours faithfully,

"D. W. STEVENS."

Mr. Stevens was not the bloodless type of diplomat which the world knows in fiction. He was a warm-hearted, generous gentleman, who believed in mutual trustfulness, mutual help-

fulness and unswerving honesty. When he was confronted by the Korean who had shot him, he forgave him, because of the ignorance which had inspired the act, thus observing the illustrious example of that One who gave Christianity to the world. "You poor, ignorant man! I do not blame you for shooting me," he told the man, "because you do not understand." Nothing could have been more sublime, but it was in keeping with his entire life. There are few who know that he was the mainstay of his sisters; for his devotion to them was not a thing to be hawked about for the public to admire, but a natural duty which deep affection made light.

The Emperor of Japan honored Mr. Stevens in life by conferring upon him numerous high decorations, and in death with the Rising Sun of the first class, the highest honor a Japanese Government servant can expect from his Sovereign as a reward for any lengthy services, and a gift of \$100,000, including a sum from the Korean Emperor, to his heirs. These rewards were the mere expression of the affection and gratitude of His Majesty and of the entire Japanese people for the magnificent work which Mr. Stevens performed in their interest. As a son of Japan it is a pleasure to me, as he cannot be recalled, to add my wreath of thankfulness to those which have been placed upon his tomb, and here to give testimony to what he accomplished for humanity.

K. TAKAHIRA.